

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1        1. A method for responding to an electronic mail message selected by a user, where the  
2        user accesses a mailbox adapted to store one or more electronic mail messages, each  
3        electronic mail message having a unique identifier and an identifier storage field, the  
4        method comprising the steps of:

5                retrieving the unique identifier of the selected electronic mail message;  
6                searching the mailbox for at least one related electronic mail message having the  
7        unique identifier of the selected electronic mail message in the identifier storage field of  
8        said related electronic mail message; and  
9                providing information relating to results of said searching the mailbox step.

1        2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying to the user said  
2        information relating to said results of said searching the mailbox step.

1        3. The method of claim 2, wherein said displaying step is executed in response to a  
2        request from the user to respond to the selected electronic mail message.

1        4. The method of claim 1, wherein said information relating to said results of said  
2        searching the mailbox step comprises a count of said related electronic mail messages  
3        found in said searching the mailbox step.

1        5. The method of claim 1, wherein said information relating to said results of said  
2        searching the mailbox step comprises the unique identifier of each said related electronic  
3        mail message found in said searching the mailbox step.

1        6. The method of claim 1, wherein each electronic mail message further comprises a time  
2        field for storing a sent time, and wherein said searching the mailbox step further  
3        comprises the step of searching the time field of each said related electronic mail  
4        message for a sent time later than the sent time of the selected electronic mail message.

1       7. The method of claim 6, wherein said information relating to said results of said  
2       searching the mailbox step comprises data relating to results of said searching the time  
3       field step.

1       8. The method of claim 6, wherein said searching the mailbox step further comprises the  
2       step of determining which said related electronic mail message has a latest sent time in  
3       the time field.

1       9. The method of claim 8, wherein said information relating to said results of said  
2       searching the mailbox step comprises data relating to results of said determining step.

1       10. A method for generating a response to a first electronic mail message received by a  
2       user, the first electronic mail message received from a mailbox associated with the user  
3       and adapted to store one or more electronic mail messages, each electronic mail message  
4       having a unique identifier and an identifier storage field, comprising the steps of:

5              receiving a request from the user to respond to the first electronic mail message;  
6              retrieving the unique identifier of the first electronic mail message;  
7              receiving information about related electronic mail messages stored in the  
8       mailbox and determined to be sent in response to the first electronic mail message based  
9       on the unique identifier of the first electronic mail message; and  
10             displaying said information to the user.

1       11. The method of claim 10, wherein said related electronic mail messages are  
2       determined to be sent in response to the first electronic mail message if the unique  
3       identifier of the first electronic mail message is stored in the identifier storage field of  
4       said related electronic mail message.

1       12. The method of claim 10, wherein said information displayed to the user comprises a  
2       count of said related electronic mail messages.

1       13. The method of claim 10, wherein said information displayed to the user comprises a  
2       listing of said related electronic mail messages, wherein said listing includes at least one  
3       of: a sender, a recipient, a subject, a sent time, and a message body.

1       14. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:  
2              generating a reply electronic mail message to said first electronic mail message,  
3              said reply electronic mail message comprising a reply identifier storage field; and  
4              storing the unique identifier of the first electronic mail message in said reply  
5              identifier storage field of said reply electronic mail message.

1       15. The method of claim 10, wherein each electronic mail message further comprises a  
2       time field for storing a sent time, and wherein said receiving information step further  
3       comprises the step of determining which said related electronic mail message has a latest  
4       sent time in the time field.

1       16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of highlighting to the user said  
2       related electronic mail message having the latest sent time in the time field.

1       17. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of opening for the user said  
2       related electronic mail message having the latest sent time in the time field.

1       18. A computer readable medium having embodied thereon a computer program, the  
2       computer program being executable by a machine to perform a method for responding to  
3       an electronic mail message selected by a user, where the user accesses a mailbox adapted  
4       to store one or more electronic mail messages, each electronic mail message having a  
5       unique identifier and an identifier storage field, the method comprising the steps of:  
6              retrieving the unique identifier of the selected electronic mail message;  
7              searching the mailbox for at least one related electronic mail message having the  
8       unique identifier of the selected electronic mail message in the identifier storage field of  
9       said related electronic mail message; and  
10          providing information relating to results of said searching the mailbox step.

- 1        19. The computer readable medium of claim 18, further comprising the step of displaying  
2              to the user said information relating to said results of said searching the mailbox step.
- 1        20. The computer readable medium of claim 18, wherein each electronic mail message  
2              further comprises a time field for storing a sent time, and wherein said searching the  
3              mailbox step further comprises the steps of:  
4                  searching the time field of each said related electronic mail message for a sent  
5                  time later than the sent time of the selected electronic mail message; and  
6                  determining which said related electronic mail message has a latest sent time in  
7                  the time field.
- 1        21. A computer readable medium having embodied thereon a computer program, the  
2              computer program being executable by a machine to perform a method for generating a response to a first electronic mail message received by a user, the first electronic mail  
3              message received from a mailbox associated with the user and adapted to store one or  
4              more electronic mail messages, each electronic mail message having a unique identifier  
5              and an identifier storage field, comprising the steps of:  
6                  receiving a request from the user to respond to the first electronic mail message;  
7                  retrieving the unique identifier of the first electronic mail message;  
8                  receiving information about related electronic mail messages stored in the  
9              mailbox and determined to be sent in response to the first electronic mail message based  
10             on the unique identifier of the first electronic mail message; and  
11             displaying said information to the user.
- 1        22. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein each electronic mail message  
2              further comprises a time field for storing a sent time, and wherein said receiving  
3              information step further comprises the step of determining which said related electronic  
4              mail message has a latest sent time in the time field.